Lebanon
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CONFIDENTIAL

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

(R)

May 16, 1953

SUBJECT: Lebanon

PLACE: Ministry of Foreign Affairs

PARTICIPANTS:

United States	Lebanon
Honorable John Foster DULLES, Secretary of State	His Excellency George Bey HAKIM, Minister of Foreign Affairs

PRESENT:

Honorable Harold E. STASSEN, Mutual Security Administrator	His Excellency Fuad Bey AMMOUN, Director-General of Foreign Affairs
Honorable Harold B. MINOR, American Ambassador	Halim Bey ABU-IZZUDIN, Chief of Protocol
Honorable Henry A. BYROADE, Assistant Secretary of State	
Honorable Douglas MacARTHUR II, State Department Counselor	
Mr. John H. BRUINS, Counselor of Embassy	
Lieutenant Colonel Stephen MEADE, United States Army	

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
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REPORTER: Armin H. MEYER, Second Secretary of Embassy

1. Opening Remarks. Expressing his pleasure at being in Lebanon, Secretary Dulles explained that his presence and that of Mr. Stassen, during a time when there was much to keep them busy in Washington, testified to the importance which the United States government attaches to the Near East. When Foreign Minister Hakim noted that as an intermediary between East and West, Lebanon had much in common with the latter, the Secretary noted that one of Lebanon's great assets was its Ambassador in Washington Dr. Charles MALIK. Recalling Dr. Malik's speech at the Japanese Peace Treaty Conference in San Francisco and his other accomplishments, the Secretary declared that Dr. Malik's voice "carries great authority". The Foreign Minister noted agreement on the basis of his own association with Dr. Malik for several years in Washington.

2. Arab-U.S.

2. Arab-U.S. "Rift". Citing America's high reputation in the Arab world in times past — due to American schools, Lebanese emigrants in the United States, and the Lebanese' great respect for American ideals — the Foreign Minister reported a widening rift which makes it difficult for Lebanon to play its traditional role. Lebanon is an Arab country, he said, and it must maintain solidarity and common policies with the other Arab states. Speaking as a friend and frankly, he said, he was distressed by the rift and hoped sincerely that the trend could be reversed and the former friendship and love for America restored — all in the general interest of peace and freedom. He noted how Lebanon has cooperated with the West at the United Nations. Lebanon has a strong sense of freedom and democracy, he said, and it is Lebanon's desire that its democratic institutions should grow, despite the fact that all around it the tendency is in the opposite direction. If Lebanon is strengthened and preserved, he concluded, it can continue as in times past to play its useful role between East and West.

3. Purpose of Secretary's Visit. Stating that he had not come to make decisions but to get ideas, the Secretary said he would gladly listen to anything concrete the Foreign Minister might suggest. He was grieved, he said, that a measure of ill will now replaces good-will. However, this was due to the acts of a previous administration. A Republican regime is now in power, he stated, and while it will not be possible to obliterate the past (Israel exists and it will continue to exist), it does not preclude the possibility of better friendship to eradicate the scars. The Secretary thought that typical of the foundation on which American-Lebanese friendship can be based is the fact that large numbers of Lebanese emigrants live in the United States. On the personal side, he noted that his sister had lived in Beirut for two years and that his brother was active in affairs which also were of considerable interest to Lebanon.

4. Egypt. Hoping that the United States would do everything possible to re-establish friendship, the Foreign Minister cited Palestine and Egypt as the two most serious outstanding issues. The Secretary replied that he and his party had worked for three days on the Egyptian matter in Cairo and he believed that their presence had prevented the problem from becoming much worse.

5. Relations with Allies. The Secretary said the assumption in this part of the world seems to be that the United States is always siding with Great Britain and France. Asserting that while publicly we appear to agree, the Secretary assured the Foreign Minister that we have many differences with our allies and he cited the current flare-up between certain members of the British Parliament and the American Congress as evidence. There is no reason to conclude, the Secretary said, that the United States has lost its love of freedom and independence which it itself had won 160 years ago.

He cited

He cited American policy in Cuba and the Philippines to show that the United States is not a colonial-minded power. The Foreign Minister said he realized this full well but he felt the United States, as the world's leading power, should use its great influence on its major allies. Stirring nationalism, he said, cannot be overlooked anymore. The Secretary asked if the Foreign Minister was assuming that the United States does not use its influence and he assured the Foreign Minister that things would be much worse in the world if United States influence were not being exercised.

6. Suez Solution. The Foreign Minister asserted that Egyptian nationalism is genuine, based upon 70 years of unwanted British occupation. If the British had not been there, according to the Foreign Minister, Egypt would have been able to accept MEDO; the presence of the British forced Egypt to reject it. Since you cannot undo the fact that the British were there for 70 years, the Secretary said the problem is what you do about the fact that in that particular area of the world which is important there are bases, landing fields and large amounts of supplies and equipment. The Secretary said the United States is doing everything within its power to find a solution. Abandoning or scuttling the base, he said, is obviously not the best answer, for it would create a vacuum, and that should not happen.

7. Communism is Major Issue. The Secretary stated that in a sense it was a luxury that the people of the Near East could consider Egypt and Palestine their greatest problems. He described how in the larger sphere of global relations the United States wields the balance against Soviet Russia. If that shield were removed, the Arabs would really have something to worry about. He added that if they did not want that shield it could be withdrawn. Citing STALIN's writings of 1924 on "The Problems of Nationalism", the Secretary recalled Stalin's exhortation regarding the use of nationalism to achieve the Soviet goal --- an international single socialist state. Stalin's recommended tactic was to use nationalism as a tool to break ties between the powers and their dependencies after which amalgamation with the USSR could take place. If there is no realization of this danger, the Secretary declared, if there is no desire to maintain the balance of power, including the recognition of the Suez power position, then he believed the consequences were indeed serious. He felt this Soviet program was evolving and perhaps it would not be realized until it is too late.

8. Israel Issue Serves Communism. Agreeing with the Secretary's thesis, the Foreign Minister said he was sorry to report that the Soviets were succeeding very well with their tactic. He noted that the refugee problem also lends itself to Communist utilization. He felt, furthermore, that the very creation of Israel had served Soviet policy because it has

been used

been used to incite the Arabs against the West. As long as the refugee situation is unsolved, he said, as long as Israel appropriates Arab properties unrightfully, as long as the boundaries and Jerusalem questions are not settled, the situation will get worse and worse and the Communists will exploit it. He felt that was dangerous for both the Arabs and the United States.

9. United States Impartiality. Expressing hope for a solution to the Palestine problem, the Secretary suspected that it would be gradual and not all at once. It was the strong desire of President EISENHOWER, he said, to proceed with justice and equity vis-a-vis both parties in this controversy. The past could not be undone, the Secretary stated, but it is possible to proceed from here on with fairness and impartiality. There is a feeling that the past administration was dominated by Jewish influences, he said, but that is not the case with this administration. According to the Secretary, President Eisenhower has a tremendous regard for the Arab peoples and the Arab states. That is primarily the reason for the Secretary's visit to the Near East. They came to visit the Arab states, Israel was included simply because it was in the area. The Secretary said it is his hope to be helpful in the solution of some of these problems. Because of emotional bitterness, with which he could well sympathize, the Secretary realized the difficulty in finding solutions which both sides would consider fair and just. Nevertheless, it would be disastrous if the area were abandoned to strife and struggle, ultimately losing its independence. The Foreign Minister concluded the conversation by expressing his high hopes in the new American administration and stating his belief that it is still not too late to save the Near East.